

Supporting Middle America's Airports Act

In Short:

The ***Supporting Middle America's Airports Act*** would reopen applications for the Essential Air Service (EAS) program for three years allowing small, rural airports to receive greater support for providing air service. This would provide tens of thousands of Americans in small communities with access to air service.

Background:

The Essential Air Service (EAS) program was created by Congress through the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 to ensure that small rural communities were still receiving air service after airline deregulation. The program was permanently extended in 1996 and currently assist 175 communities across the United States. EAS requires the Department of Transportation (DOT) to support an airline that completes two round trips a day with a medium sized aircraft or additional trips with small aircraft from a small community to a medium or large airport hub.

In 2012, Congress tightened eligibility requirements and limited access to the program to airports already enrolled in the program. Since the reforms were enacted eleven years ago, many small communities have lost access to airspace. By reopening the program for three years, the DOT can help connect these small communities to the rest of the United States.

Costs:

With tight eligibility requirements, we estimate that the cost to reopen the Essential Air Service program would not exceed \$30 million.

The Supporting Middle America's Airports Act:

This bill would:

- (1) Reopen the Essential Air Service program for new applications for a three-year period.